

Tri-Town Meeting of Arlington, Lexington, Bedford Bicycle Committees

Minutes

Date: 24 February 2021

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Via Zoom conference, hosted by Arlington

Attendees included members of the three towns' bicycle committees as well as members of the public:

Arlington: Christopher Tonkin (chair, ABAC), Scott Smith (taking minutes), Adam MacNeill, Doug Greenfield, Doug Mayo-Wells, Jack Johnson, Muris Kobaslija, Rod Holland, Stephan Miller, Linda Epstein

Bedford: Mark Bailey (chair), Craig Jackson

Lexington: Kevin Falcone (chair), Michael Tabaczynski, George Gagliardi, Ram Reddy, Jim Cadenhead

1. Greetings and Introductions, ground rules for online meetings.

Christopher Tonkin welcomed people to the meeting. We made introductions.

2. Appointment of a secretary to take the minutes, if quorum reached.

Scott Smith volunteered to take notes.

3. Report by Christopher Tonkin on the last 18 months of ABAC and associated bike activity in Arlington.

- MBTA service cuts that will affect several bus routes in the tri-town area
- Thorndike Place is proposed new development near Alewife on the north side of Route 2. Plan revisions include reduced car parking, increased bike parking, and a Bluebikes station. Documents are on Arlington Zoning Board of Appeals website.
- Arlington submitted a Bike Friendly Community renewal application
- Arlington is considering two new locations for Bluebikes stations, both a bit to the west of Arlington Center. Current stations are in East Arlington and Arlington Center.
- The Connect Arlington sustainable transportation plan is under development
- Arlington has made a MassTrails grant application to connect the Mystic River path and Minuteman Bikeway (via south side of lower Mystic Lake)
- Community Preservation Act funding for bikeway study will be submitted to Special Town meeting. Focuses will be on safety and placemaking
- \$25k capital funding has been approved for bicycle parking

- Arlington had a car-bike fatality at Massachusetts Avenue and Appleton Street. Arlington, where a motorist turned left into the path of a cyclist. It is a difficult intersection, and the Town is looking at redesign of the intersection and immediate surrounding area, with a design-review committee. After the crash, a temporary no left turn from Mass Ave to Appleton was established during the evening peak period, when solar glare is an issue.
- Lake Street/Bikeway light is now live. Some tweaks being made. However, peak hour traffic on Lake Street seems to be far below pre-Covid levels.

4. Report by Scott Smith on comparisons of bikeway use at Swan Place (Kickstand Cafe) pre and during the pandemic.

Arlington has a continuous counter on the bikeway just east of Swan Place. We reviewed counts in September – December 2019 vs. September December 2020

The slide deck is on the Town of Arlington web site:

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=54437>

To summarize:

- Overall bicycle volumes were nearly the same in both years
- Lower weekday AM and PM peak period traffic in 2020, but slightly higher midday traffic
- Higher weekend and holiday traffic in 2020

Attendees were not surprised by the results (the bikeway enables people to get out of the house). Mark Bailey noted it would be nice to have continuous counters near the Town borders, and asked how much they cost. We estimated perhaps \$25-35k including installation. The Arlington unit was made by Eco-Counter.

5. Update from Kevin Falcone on Bikeway and town wide bike activities in Lexington.

- Lexington had a separated bike lane trial in East Mass Ave in Lexington in July 2019, during a MM Bikeway closure. Feedback was vocal. Many intersections on the south side of Mass Ave made turns for motorists challenging. It was effective for traffic calming.
- Lexington bike committee missed meeting for much of 2020, due to COVID
- MassDOT has a counter on the path near Routes 4/225 and Lexington DPW. They only have two dumps of data, as Lexington has to ask MassDOT for the data.
- Minuteman Bikeway map will be republished this spring. Arlington has requested a few hundred for Town Hall.
- Interpretive sign updates have been tabled due to lack of funding.
- Friends of Lexington Bikeway is replacing water fountain by Lexington Depot.

- Lexington will be updating the downtown streetscape, which will include restoring some bike parking and adding a bike node (parking, repair station) near Bank of America.
- LBAC asking for more bike parking at the offices, as part of the Hartwell renovation district project. The jughandle at 4/225 and Hartwell Avenue will be redone.
- Lexington is redoing its comprehensive plan this year.

6. Update from Mark Bailey on Bikeway and other town wide bike activities in Bedford

He showed a plan for Minuteman bikeway extension in Bedford, going towards Concord, beyond Depot Park. It will go to the Concord border near Great Meadows. They are at 75% design with planned construction in 2023. It will include

- Separated bike lane on southside of Railroad Ave.
- Connection to Reformatory Branch trail.
- Improvements at Hartwell Road and Lavender Lane crossings.
- An underpass at the Route 62 crossing. There will be a small parking area which will provide one of the two access routes (the other is a sidewalk loop) between Route 62 and the path.

Some are bemoaning the loss of the quiet unpaved path. However, Mark noted that this plan is making the path more inclusive and accessible.

Regarding possible extension to Concord, Craig Jackson said that Concord has been more focused on the Bruce Freeman rail trail. The unpaved section in Concord is on a former railroad, using a raised bed. Ram Reddy noted that Marcia Rasmussen from DPW has been responsive about questions regarding the Bruce Freeman Trail

Finally, Mark noted that Bedford is prioritizing bike tourism, with improved access to trails.

Rod Holland asked about snow removal, noting that it has improved on the Bedford segment of the Minuteman Bikeway over the past few years. Mark responded that it is in discussion with DPW, but not resolved yet.

Ram Reddy asked about the Narrow Gauge Trail to Billerica. Mark responded that it is next on the list, for reasons of accessibility, inclusivity, bike tourism.

Christopher Tonkin noted that Belmont is working to finish the path from Alewife to Belmont Center, and that the hours of use restriction on the Minuteman Bikeway in Arlington was removed by Town Meeting.

7. Future meetings, set dates, expand to other communities?

Should this group be expanded to other communities? Consider:

- Concord
- Belmont (Belmont has no bike committee)

- Cambridge (has a professional coordinator and term limits)
- Somerville
- Perhaps a regional meeting reaching out to other communities such as Medford and Waltham

An approach might be a larger regional meeting (similar to the ABAC winter social, but more of a meeting), plus a smaller group focused on the Minuteman bikeway (this TriTown group, with an invitation to Concord and Cambridge)

Meetings of the TriTown group have been easier to schedule in the winter. We agreed to aim for twice a year, with our next meeting on November 3rd, hosted by Bedford. Focus to be on a consistent user experience for the Minuteman Bikeway.

8. Any other business?

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at ~8:30 PM.